

Message Text

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ACTION AF-08

INFO OCT-01 EUR-12 ISO-00 USIE-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-04

H-01 INR-07 L-03 NSAE-00 NSC-05 PA-01 PRS-01 SP-02

SS-15 NSCE-00 SSO-00 INRE-00 CU-02 MCT-01 /063 W

-----151802Z 051055 /50

O P 151719Z FEB 77

FM AMEMBASSY FREETOWN

TO SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 4862

INFO AMEMBASSY ABIDJAN PRIORITY

AMEMBASSY CONAKRY PRIORITY

AMEMBASSY DAKAR PRIORITY

AMEMBASSY LAGOS PRIORITY

AMEMBASSY LONDON PRIORITY

AMEMBASSY MONROVIA PRIORITY

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LONDON FOR SEITZ

EO 11652: NA

TAGS: PINS PINT SL

SUBJ: PARLIAMENT MEETS: NEW ELECTIONS?

REF: (A) FREETOWN 531, (B) FREETOWN 530 AND OTHERS

1. SUMMARY: PARLIAMENT MET IN CLOSED SESSION EVENING OF FEBRUARY 14 AND IN OPEN SESSION FOLLOWING MORNING. WHETHER THE PRESIDENT ADJOURNS PARLIAMENT AND CALLS NEW ELECTIONS IS THE ISSUE. FREETOWN REMAINS CALM AS MAJORITY OF SECONDARY STUDENTS RETURNED TO SCHOOL AND COLLEGE STUDENTS PREPARE FOR REOPENING OF FOURAH BAY COLLEGE ON FEBRUARY 21. HOWEVER, IN PROVINCES DISTURBANCES CONTINUE AND SCHOOL ATTENDANCE REPORTEDLY IS LOW. END SUMMARY.

2. SOME SEVENTY-FIVE MEMBERS OF PARLIAMENT MET WITH PRESIDENT

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STEVENS IN A CLOSED PARLIMENTARY MEETING FOR 25 MINUTES

YESTERDAY AND FOLLOWED HIS DEPARTURE WITH A FURTHER FORTY MINUTE

SESSION OF THEIR OWN. ACCORDING TO PRESS REPORTS THE CLOSED

SESSION DEALT MAINLY WITH APC PARTY AND PARLIAMENTARY AFFAIRS,

"ALTHOUGH THERE WERE INDICATIONS OF AN IMMINENT GENERAL ELECTION."

THIS MORNING PARLIAMENT CONTINUED WITH AN OPEN SESSION, WHICH

IS EXPECTED TO PRODUCE SPEECHES IN SUPPORT OF GOVERNMENT

POLICIES AND CONDEMN INTERNAL AND EXTERNAL FOES OF THE GOVERNMENT. HOWEVER, WE WILL NOT HAVE THE RESULTS OF THE FULL SESSION UNTIL LATER IN THE EVENING.

3. OPINION AMONG USUALLY KNOWLEDGEABLE SIERRA LEONEANS APPEARS DIVIDED WHETHER THE PRESIDENT REALLY WILL ADJOURN PARLIAMENT AND CALL FOR NEW ELECTIONS. THE VAST MAJORITY OF PARLIAMENTARIANS ARE OPPOSED TO NEW ELECTIONS, CLAIMING THEY INCURRED DEBTS DURING THE LAST ELECTION THAT HAVE NOT YET BEEN REPAID. MANY PROBABLY FEAR (RIGHTLY) THEY WILL NOT BE REELECTED. HOWEVER, THE PRESIDENT HAS THE CONSTITUTIONAL AUTHORITY TO ADJOURN PARLIAMENT WITHOUT ITS CONSENT AND CALL FOR NEW ELECTIONS. WHETHER HE WILL HAVE A LOYAL PARTY IN THE NEXT PARLIAMENT IF HE DOES IS ANOTHER QUESTION. WE HAVE LEARNED FROM A LOCAL MERCHANT THAT THE GOVERNMENT HAS PURCHASED ALL THE SOUND AMPLIFICATION UNITS IN TOWN AND HAS REQUESTED ADDITIONAL IMPORTS.

4. FREETOWN REMAINS CALM AND MOST SECONDARY SCHOOL STUDENTS APPEAR TO HAVE RETURNED TO CLASSES. CONTRARY TO REFTTEL (A), FOURAH BAY COLLEGE ANNOUNCED IT WOULD REOPEN MONDAY, FEBRUARY 21. HINDOLO TYRE, PRESIDENT OF THE STUDENT UNION OF THE COLLEGE TOLD AN AMERICAN STUDENT THAT THE STUDENTS WOULD CONTINUE THEIR CAMPAIGN AGAINST THE GOVERNMENT. UP COUNTRY THE SITUATION REMAINS TROUBLED WITH PROTESTS AND DEMONSTRATIONS CONTINUING IN THE SOUTHERN PROVINCE, YESTERDAY, FEBRUARY 14, LONG DISTANCE BUSES TRAVELING TO TIAMA, BO AND KENEMA WERE TURNED BACK BY POLICE, PRESUMABLY BECAUSE OF OBSTACLES ALONG THE ROAD. A CALLER FROM BO REPORTED CALM IN THE CITY, BUT ONLY A FEW CHILDREN ATTENDING SCHOOL.

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5. VICE PRESIDENT KOROMA WENT SUDDENLY TO KENEMA TO ADDRESS AN APC RALLY OVER THE WEEKEND. HE SAID "THE COUNTRY HAD TRIUMPHED OVER EVIL MACHINATIONS OF DISGRUNTLED ELEMENTS" AND THAT THE "APC GOVERNMENT HAD EMERGED WISER...AND MORE DETERMINED... TO DIRECT THE AFFAIRS OF THIS NATION". THE PRESS REPORTED THERE WERE LOUD CHEERS WHEN HE SAID, "WE ARE ALL HUMAN AND CAN MAKE MISTAKES, AND AS HUMANS WE SHOULD ACCEPT OUR FAULTS." WE HAVE AN UNCONFIRMED REPORT THAT A COUNTER DEMONSTRATION WAS ORGANIZED THE FOLLOWING DAY TO PROTEST HIS SPEECH.

SAMUELS

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Message Attributes

Automatic Decaptioning: X
Capture Date: 01-Jan-1994 12:00:00 am
Channel Indicators: n/a
Current Classification: UNCLASSIFIED
Concepts: CENTRAL LEGISLATURE, ELECTIONS
Control Number: n/a
Copy: SINGLE
Sent Date: 15-Feb-1977 12:00:00 am
Decaption Date: 01-Jan-1960 12:00:00 am
Decaption Note:
Disposition Action: RELEASED
Disposition Approved on Date:
Disposition Case Number: n/a
Disposition Comment: 25 YEAR REVIEW
Disposition Date: 22 May 2009
Disposition Event:
Disposition History: n/a
Disposition Reason:
Disposition Remarks:
Document Number: 1977FREETO00587
Document Source: CORE
Document Unique ID: 00
Drafter: n/a
Enclosure: n/a
Executive Order: N/A
Errors: N/A
Expiration:
Film Number: D770053-1053
Format: TEL
From: FREETOWN
Handling Restrictions: n/a
Image Path:
ISecure: 1
Legacy Key: link1977/newtext/t19770242/aaaabkoi.tel
Line Count: 108
Litigation Code IDs:
Litigation Codes:
Litigation History:
Locator: TEXT ON-LINE, ON MICROFILM
Message ID: 7945cec6-c288-dd11-92da-001cc4696bcc
Office: ACTION AF
Original Classification: LIMITED OFFICIAL USE
Original Handling Restrictions: n/a
Original Previous Classification: n/a
Original Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Page Count: 2
Previous Channel Indicators: n/a
Previous Classification: LIMITED OFFICIAL USE
Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Reference: 77 FREETOWN 531, 77 FREETOWN 530
Retention: 0
Review Action: RELEASED, APPROVED
Review Content Flags:
Review Date: 02-Feb-2005 12:00:00 am
Review Event:
Review Exemptions: n/a
Review Media Identifier:
Review Release Date: n/a
Review Release Event: n/a
Review Transfer Date:
Review Withdrawn Fields: n/a
SAS ID: 3322563
Secure: OPEN
Status: NATIVE
Subject: PARLIAMENT MEETS: NEW ELECTIONS?
TAGS: PINS, PINT, SL
To: STATE
Type: TE
vdkgvwkey: odbc://SAS/SAS.dbo.SAS_Docs/7945cec6-c288-dd11-92da-001cc4696bcc
Review Markings:
Margaret P. Grafeld
Declassified/Released
US Department of State
EO Systematic Review
22 May 2009
Markings: Margaret P. Grafeld Declassified/Released US Department of State EO Systematic Review 22 May 2009